over a span of 6-7 years with financial assistance to the extent of Rs.1358.62 crores.

Coffee plantation in Andhra Pradesh

1703. SHRIMATI N.P. DURGA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the coffee plantation in Andhra Pradesh is giving excellent results, besides providing employment to local tribal communities of the Eastern Ghats;

(b) whether it is a fact that presently in more than 5,00 hectares of forest land there is coffee plantation in Andhra Pradesh;

(c) whether any proposal by the Andhra Pradesh Forest Development Corporation has been submitted to the Ministry for expansion of coffee plantation in the same zones since the climate and other conditions are suitable for coffee cultivation; and

(d) if so, the reasons for not allowing the APFDC for expansion of coffee plantations?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRJ JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

Ban on import of rice, ground-nuts and oil seeds by Russia

†1704. SHRI SATYAVRAT CHATURVEDI:
SHRI MOTILAL VORA:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Russia has imposed a ban on import of rice, groundnuts and oil seeds since 1st May, 2007;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) what action is being taken by the Government against those traders who have not complied with the quality control norms in export and have tarnished the image of the country; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The ban had been imposed with effect from 1st June, 2007 on the ground of (a) detection of impermissible levels of pesticides in rice (b) grain pests

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

in groundnut and (c) detection of moldy odour, aflatoxin and metallomagnetic admixture. The ban on export of rice has been lifted subsequently with effect from 20th July, 2007 after signing a protocol in Moscow on 10th July, 2007.

(c) and (d) The Government has sought explanation from the exporters who have exported rice, groundnuts and oilseeds to Russia upto March, 2007. They have confirmed by producing evidence that the consignments were duly fumigated and dispatched after obtaining phytosanitary certificate from concemed authorities. The exports were made as per contractual terms and conditions between exporter and importers in Russia. The contamination may have developed after shipment of the goods.

Excise duty exemption to Ashok Paper Mill

1705. KUMAR DEEPAK DAS: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government had promised 50 per cent excise duty exemption to Ashok Paper Mills which it availed partly in two phases of commercial production;

(b) the reasons for not extending this exemption to the balance amount of excise duty despite repeated request from the Government of Assam;

(c) whether rehabilitation of Ashok Paper Mills, Government was assured under the Assam Accord and a fund of Rs. 10.04 crores as earmarked for cash losses; and was to be reimbursed as part of capital expenditure; and

(d) if so, whether a balance of Rs. 5 crore is not being released?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL POLICY AND PROMOTION, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR): (a) Government has fulfilled its commitment under the Assam Accord with respect to Ashok Paper Mills by way of granting *ad-hoc* exemption twice to the extent of 50% of the normal effective duty. The first exemption was given in November, 1985 and was valid for a period of 5 years. Another exemption for a period of 5 years was given on 28th December, 1995.

(b) The Department of Revenue has already fulfilled its commitment under the Assam Accord. The power to grant adhoc exemption has itself been substantially curtailed after the amendment carried out in 1999 in the North East Package. At present, the Central Government is empowered to grant *adhoc* exemption from excise duty only in cases of secret, strategic and charitable nature. In this background it would not be possible to grant a unit specific exemption to Ashok Paper Mills.

(c) Under the Assam Accord for rehabilitation of Ashok Paper Mills, a fund of Rs.l0.04 crore was, earmarked for cash losses in the first two years of operation. The Government has already released Rs.5.04 crore under this head in two instalments in the years 1997 and 1999.

(d) The balance amount of Rs.5 crore was to be released after commencement of commercial production and incurring cash losses. Since this conditionality has not been fulfilled by the Ashok Paper Mills the balance of Rs. 5 crore has not yet been released. At present the matter is pending before the Hon'ble Guwahati High Court.